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Cochran Success Story

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Cochran

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Report Highlights:

In FY2014 FAS/Pretoria sent eight South Africans from the public and private sectors to participate in a Farm Management training course through the USDA Cochran Fellowship Program. The course emphasized skills transfer and empowerment for emerging farm sector officials and managers. During a two-week visit to the United States, the Cochran fellows learned about effective policies and best practices to ensure greater participation by farmers in the agricultural value chain as well as the economy as a whole. Since returning home to South Africa, one Cochran alumni has been transferring the skills he learned during the training program to students at his school and neighboring schools, aspiring farmers, and other local community members. His goal is to instill entrepreneurial skills through hands-on involvement in sustainable vegetable production.

Cochran Success Story: Farm Management 2014

From May 13-25, 2014, FAS/Pretoria sent eight South Africans from the public and private sectors to participate in a Farm Management training program through the USDA Cochran Fellowship Program. The program was designed in partnership with the Colorado State University Department of Agriculture & Resource Economics in Denver and emphasized skills transfer and empowerment for emerging farm sector officials and managers. The Cochran fellows attended lectures by university faculty and visited local farms, producer associations, cooperatives, and farmers markets, in order to learn about effective policies and best practices aimed at ensuring greater participation by farmers in the agricultural value chain as well as the economy as a whole.

Outcomes, Benefits, and Follow-up Achievements

The experiences and skills acquired through the Cochran Fellowship Farm Management program are applicable to small-scale farming operations and school gardens, an outcome exemplified by Joseph Mugumbate, a secondary school teacher and alumni of the 2014 Farm Management program. Mr. Mugumbate returned from the program motivated to apply his learning back home and has taken the initiative to keep Post abreast of his activities since his return from the United States. This mathematics teacher and sponsor of the school environmental club has spear-headed the development of school gardens to support student nutrition, both at his home school and at partner schools. Joseph serves as a mentor, transferring the skills he learned through the Cochran Fellowship Program by organizing workshops, seminars and hands-on training for students, aspiring farmers, and other local community members. Mr. Mugumbate's goal is to instill entrepreneurial skills through hands-on involvement in sustainable vegetable production. So far the approximately 50 students in Joseph's Go-Green student environmental club have raised beets, carrots, spinach, potatoes, and cabbage. Produce from the project is distributed to students from low-income families and other needy community members.



Cochran Alumni Joseph Mugumbate describes an innovative method for cultivating potatoes that he learned in the Farm Management training program.



Members of Joseph's Go-Green student environmental club displaying the fruits of their efforts.



Abigail Nguema visits the school garden run by Cochran Alumni Joseph Mugumbate.

Participant Feedback

All of the South African participants in the FY2014 Cochran Farm Management program were first time visitors to the United States. The alumni rated the program positively, highlighting the practical, hands-on nature of the training course and the value in meeting farmers, extension agents, and other agricultural professionals. The participants noted a substantial increase in their skills and knowledge as a result of the training, including an understanding of U.S. farming practices that are applicable to the South African context. Several alumni pointed out that the sustainable crop production practices observed during their training are useful for emerging, small-scale farmers and school nutrition gardening, to bolster food security and combat hunger and poverty.

The participants expressed appreciation to USDA for coordinating and funding the Cochran program, Colorado State University for developing and implementing the training course, and the South African Ministry of Agriculture for funding their international airfare.

FAS/Pretoria Agricultural Attaché

South African Cochran Alumni from the 2014 Farm Management Program:

Mr. Songezo Masande Gelese, NFS Field Agent, National Emergent Red Meat Producers Organization (NERPO) www.nerpo.org.za , Lynnwood, South Africa;

Mr. Michael Masinge, Head of Department, Waverly Girls High School, Johannesburg, South Africa;

Mr. Joseph Mugumbate, Teacher, Waverley Girls High Schools, Johannesburg, South Africa;

Ms. Daphney Bodibe Marabe, Plant Production Officer, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries www.daff.gov.za , Pretoria, South Africa;

Ms. Osenkeng Gloria Maboe, Assistant Plant Production Officer, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries www.daff.gov.za;

Ms. Lufuno Phaswana, Agricultural Advisor, Limpopo Seleka College of Agriculture;

Ms. Nothando Patricia Maphanga, Deputy Director, Department of Agriculture Ermelo;

Mr. Venty Johannes Mahlangu, Acting Chief Director, Department of Rural Development & Land Affairs Nelspruit.